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Anchorage - March 26, 1947

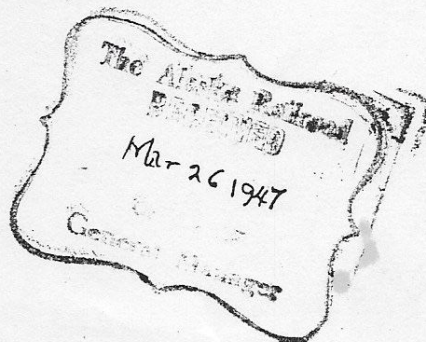
Mr. L. A. Moore

Attached story and pictures of the first train of retired equipment which was sent to Whittier for shipment Outside to you for further handling, as it is felt we should be able to get some favorable publicity in regards to the rehabilitation program.

G. A. Benedict
G. A. Benedict

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cc: Colonel J. P. Johnson ✓



GRAND OLD VETERANS OF
ALASKA AND PANAMA CANAL
END RAILROAD SERVICE

Junk Train leaves Anchorage! 1164 Tons of It! Bound for the States!

That could have been the heading of this news article, for that is the weight of the first shipment by The Alaska Railroad of a very special kind of junk. But to write a story like that would be akin to leaving your grandad out in the wilderness to starve just 'cause he can't work any more.

Friday morning a train load of dilapidated and antique railroad equipment consisting of steam locomotives, spreaders, cranes and ditchers was towed out of Anchorage, bound for Whittier. There it is to be loaded on barges and transported to Seattle, where disposition will be made of this scrap - but more properly we should say, "of this honorable metal".

Honorable metal? Yes, we repeat it. As the train pulled out of the Anchorage yards there were a few moist eyes. For like a comrade fallen in battle, even an inanimate object of iron and steel called a locomotive can have an honorable record. Just as a cowboy becomes attached to a horse, or a sailor to his ship, so does an Engineman look on an engine as an almost living partner. That's why a tear was not amiss among veteran engineers, firemen, brakemen and conductors. Hadn't they travelled thousands of miles together and many times jointly fought the Arctic storms between Seward and Fairbanks with old 244, 239, 266, 270, 606 and 618?

Since 1916 and the very beginning of the Alaska Railroad these staunch old iron veterans have been doing their part in the development

of Alaska. First they helped build the right of way and following this entered upon the endless task of hauling the supplies so necessary to sustain life in the Territory and so vital to continued growth.

But their Alaska record isn't the only impressive chapter in the life story of these locomotives. It could be said that The Alaska Railroad obtained them second hand. True, but also such a statement is most uninteresting and just about like saying, "Mrs. Truman visited Alaska accompanied by Mr. Truman who is President of the United States".

When they entered upon their Alaska service, this group of engines had already experienced much romance and adventure. If they had been human they would no doubt have admitted that they had been very happy in their past jobs, for in view of accomplishment early in their lives, they had done much to write a glorious page in the history of our Nation.

It was these sturdy engines that rolled from the Atlantic to the Pacific on the wide gauge Panama Railroad. They toiled day and night, hauling supplies, pulling car after car of muck away from Culebra Cut that the Panama Canal might become a reality. With the canal completed, they were shipped to Alaska for new and further adventures on the newly born Alaska Railroad.

The locomotives are of the Mogul or 2-6-0 type, which means they have six driving wheels preceded by a lead truck of two wheels but with no trailer truck. The engines are part of the group built in 1906 by the American Locomotive Company for service in the Canal Zone. They are approximately 75 tons in weight. As The Alaska Railroad is standard gauge (4 feet, 8-1/2 inches between rails), it was necessary to press in all wheels so they would fit narrower track, for the gauge of the Panama Rail-

way was 5 feet.

These engines performed well the tasks assigned to them for over 30 years. When World War II broke out, as tried and true veterans, they were called upon to exert their last ounce of strength in defense of the North and the Nation. But even iron and steel wear out, and it was like driving old men to do hard work, heavy tasks for which young men are best suited. The greatest tonnage in the Railroad's history had to be moved and they did their share.

However, there comes a time when a man must retire, a horse be pensioned to pasture. The end of an engine must needs be different - to not work is to rust - so it's best that its honorable remains be put to some good use.

When this retired equipment reaches Seattle it will be sold and its ultimate destination will be the melting furnace, after which the metal will be re-cast or forged into new articles. It is to be hoped that this honored metal will be used for honorable peacetime purposes. A fine record of service deserves a fitting end.

Here it may not be amiss to caution that we must be wary of the use to which our scrap is destined. Iron and steel are generally scarce throughout the world. Our government has erred in this regard, and there was a time when the face of The Alaska Railroad was red with embarrassment. We'd like to forget it, but we can't.

In 1930 and again in 1936, Japanese ships sailed up to Anchorage docks. Penny-wise and pound-foolish railroad management obligingly cut up other old Panama Canal and Alaska Railroad veterans and loaded them on the Jip ships. Maybe it's not so, but nevertheless it is alleged that the

railroad spent more to hire labor to cut up the engines and to load their boats than the Japs paid us.

That loss could be figured out by a good accountant if it hasn't already been totaled. But in its wake followed a loss which even the world's best accountant cannot estimate.

Perhaps it was the steel in old 202 or 248 that made the bombs that fell on Pearl Harbor. Or coming home to the Territory, it could have been a wheel of old 277 which provided the steel casing for the missiles that fell on Dutch Harbor.

This first shipment of antiquated equipment is to be followed by two more trainloads in the near future. Altogether some 3,000 tons of salvaged metal are in course of preparation for transportation to Seattle, including not only engines and work equipment, but frames and trucks of old freight cars and other rolling stock.

The current retirement program has been made possible by the transfer without funds of a large number of steam and diesel locomotives, work equipment, freight and passenger cars and other rolling stock from Surplus Property to The Alaska Railroad. This modernization of Alaska Railroad equipment has been brought about largely through the efforts of Col. J. P. Johnson who became General Manager of The Alaska Railroad in January, 1946. Authorization of this rehabilitation was given a far reaching impetus by Public Law 478, instigated by Col. Johnson and recently passed by Congress to permit transfer of surplus government equipment to The Alaska Railroad.

During the past two months, 11 steam locomotives and 3 diesel locomotives have arrived at Anchorage, the forerunners of a group of 40 to be put into service during the year. Also received are over 50 freight cars

including flat cars and gondolas in the first shipment, out of some 200 scheduled to be placed in service. Awaiting shipment to Alaska or en route are 480 troop sleepers which are to be converted into box cars, 110 kitchen cars to be made into refrigerator cars, and 30 hospital cars which are to be remodeled into modern passenger coaches.

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